

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAHORE 00218 01 OF 02 250355Z

21

ACTION NEA-09

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R 241030Z FEB 75

FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0340

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL KARACHI

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 LAHORE 0218

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: BHUTTO'S COMMENTS ON DOMESTIC POLITICS

REF: A. LAHORE 0154

B. LAHORE 0209

SUMMARY: DURING 24-HOUR VISIT TO LAHORE FEBRUARY 22-23, PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO PRESIDED AT CEREMONY COMMEMORATING ISLAMIC SUMMIT AND COMMENTED PUBLICLY ON CERTAIN DOMESTIC POLITICAL AFFAIRS. HE TOLD PRESS THAT BAN ON NAP WAS IN INTEREST OF NATIONAL UNITY AND DECLARED GOP HAD, IN CONSTITUTIONAL MANNER, REFERRED ISSUE TO SUPREME COURT FOR "CONFIRMATION." HE ATTEMPTED TO CLARIFY EARLIER STATEMENTS RE KASHMIR BY SAYING HE WOULD LATER ANNOUNCE FIRM DATE FOR NATIONWIDE HARTEL TO PROTEST INSTALLATION OF SHEIKH ABDULLAH AS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF KASHMIR. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS, HE INDICATED THAT "ROTATION" OF PUNJAB GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP WOULD OCCUR "SOMETIME NEXT MONTH," BUT DECLINED TO SPECIFY WHAT CHANGES MIGHT COME. ALSO ANNOUNCED HE WOULD HOLD "IMPORTANT" PRESS CONFERENCE AT RAWALPINDI WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS. PM DEPARTED FOR LARKANA MORNING FEBRUARY 23, ACCOMPANIED BY PUNJAB GOVERNOR AND GOP MINISTER MUMTAZ

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PAGE 02 LAHORE 00218 01 OF 02 250355Z

BHUTTO. END SUMMARY.

1. PIME MINISTER BHUTTO ARRIVED IN LAHORE FEBRUARY WW TO UNVEIL PLAQUE FOR FOUNDATION STONE OF MINARET TO BE CONSTRUCTED ON THE MALL TO COMMEMORATE SECOND ISLAMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE HELD HERE FEBRUARY 1974. (SEVERAL REPRESENTATIVES OF NATIONS WHICH PARTICIPATED IN SUMMIT CAME FROM EMBASSIES IN ISLAMABAD.) BHUTTO REPORTEDLY DID NOT ADDRESS CEREMONY; ONLY SPEAKER WAS GOP WORKS MINISTER SHEIKH RASHID, WHO SPOKE BRIEFLY IN PRAISE OF REVIVAL OF ISLAMIC UNITY.

2. DURING PRESS CONFERENCE AT AIRPORT ON ARRIVAL, PRIME MINISTER DECLARED THAT GOP HAD DISSOLVED NAP IN INTEREST OF NATIONAL UNITY, AND ASSERTED GOVERNMENT COULD JUSTIFY ACTION TO PEOPLE OF COUNTRY AS WELL AS TO SUPREME COURT. HE MAINTAINED GOP HAD ACTED IN CONSTITUTIONAL MANNER WITHOUT SUCCUMBING TO "PREJUDICES OR PERSONAL JUDGEMENT, "AND HAD REFERRED MATTER TO SUPREME COURT FOR "CONFIRMATION" OF GOVERNMENT'S DECISION." HE ADDED THAT IF MEMBERS OF FORMER NAP BELIEVED THEY HAD STRONG CASE, THEY SHOULD NOT BE RELUCTANT TO SUBMIT THEIR CASE TO SUPREME COURT.

3. BHUTTO TOOK OCCASION TO ANNOUNCE THAT HE WOULD SET FIRM DATE LATER FOR NATIONWIDE HARTAL TO PROTEST INSTALLATION OF SHEIKH ABDULLAH AS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF INDIAN KASHMIR. HE EXPLAINED HE COULD NOT RELY UPON OFFICIAL INDIAN ANNOUNCEMENT TO TRIGGER HARTAL BECAUSE INDIANS MIGHT "SUDDENLY AND QUIETLY PUT SHEIKH ABDULLAN ON THE GADDI (THRONE) WHICH THEY HAVE MADE FOR HIM." HE DENIED THAT GOP HAD BEEN IN COMMUNICATION WITH SHEIKH.

4. BEFORE PRIME MINISTER'S ARRIVAL, LAHORE RUMOR MILLS HAD ONCE AGAIN GINNED UP STORY MUSTAFA KHAR WOULD BE INDUCTED AS GOVERNOR OF PUNJAB; THIS TIME ON FEBRUARY 22. SUCH REPORTS WERE FRONT-PAGED IN DAWN AND LOCAL VERNACULARS. JOURNALISTS QUIZZED BHUTTO CLOSELY ON SUBJECT -- AND THIS TIME, INSTEAD OF DISMISSING QUESTION OUT OF HAND AS IN PAST, HE RESPONDED WITH POSITIVE INDICATIONS, ACCORDING TO ALL PAPERS FEBRUARY 23. IN PAKISTAN TIMES REPORT HE IS QUOTED AS SAYING, "WHAT YOU CALL CHANGES WE CALL THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LAHORE 00218 01 OF 02 250355Z

ROTATING AND REVOLUTION OF PARTY LEADERSHIP. THAT KIND OF CHANGE WILL TAKE PLACE SOMETIME NEXT MONTH. THERE ARE ONE OR TWO EVENTS WHICH HAVE TO PASS AND AFTER THEY HAVE PASSED SOME KIND OF CHANGE WILL TAKE PLACE." HE REFUSED TO ELABORATE ON CHARACTER OF INTENDED CHANGES OR INTERIM EVENTS.

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PAGE 01 LAHORE 00218 02 OF 02 251312Z

51

ACTION NEA-09

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INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL KARACHI

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 LAHORE 0218

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: BHUTTO'S COMMENTS ON DOMESTIC POLITICALS

5. ON FEBRUARY 23, BEFORE DEPARTING FOR LARKANA, BHUTTO POINTEDLY ALERTED JOURNALISTS THAT HE INTENDED TO HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE IN RAWALPINDI "IN A FEW DAYS" TO SPEAK ABOUT "NUMBER OF IMPORTANT MATTERS OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL INTEREST." ON FLIGHT TO LARKANA, HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY PUNJAB GOVERNOR AND GOP COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER MUMTAZ BHUTTO. HE WAS SEEN OFF BY CHIEF MINISTER RAMAY KHAR, WHO HAD BEEN IN LARKANA WITH PM, AND FLEW WITH HIM TO LAHORE, REMAINED OUT OF SIGHT DURING VISIT HERE.

6. POLITICALLY SIGNIFICANT SIDELIGHT WAS CAST BY PRINTED ANTI-KHAR POSTERS WHICH APPEARED AROUND DOWNTOWN LAHORE DAY OF CEREMONY. ONE ASSERTED IN LARGE LETTERS: "KHAR IS COMING, BHUTTO IS GOING -- SAY THE GOONDAS (TOUGHS), RASSAGIRS (CATTLE RUSTLERS), THIEVES AND DACOITS. BHUTTO IS COMING, KHAR IS GOING -- SAY THE THINKERS, WRITERS, PEASANTS AND WORKERS." ANOTHER ASKED SIMPLY "IS THE PUNJAB TO BECOME AN ORPHANAGE?" (REFERRING TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 LAHORE 00218 02 OF 02 251312Z

INSTALLATION OF KHAR AS STEREOTYPE OF CRUEL MASTER). THESE PROVOCATIONS APPEARED AROUND CEREMONY SITE SATURDAY MORNING BUT WERE REMOVED BEFORE BHUTTO'S ARRIVAL.

7. COMMENTS: OPINION SEEMS DIVIDED IN LAHORE OVER GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF NAP BAN AND DETENTIONS (FOR OPPOSITION STANCE, SEE REFTEL B). HOWEVER, EVENING FEBRUARY 23 TWO LEADING ATTORNEYS TOLD US, IN DISGUST, THEY BELIEVED BHUTTO HAD ALREADY TAKEN STEPS TO INSURE THAT SUPREME COURT DECIDED NAP-BANNING CASE IN FAVOR OF GOP. SPECIFICALLY, THEY EXPECTED CHIEF JUSTICE HAMOOD-UR-RAHMAN WOULD APPOINT TRIBUNAL OF THREE JUSTICES (NOT INCLUDING HIMSELF), ALL OF WHOM WOULD BE "BHUTTO'S MEN." THESE SOURCES, AMONG OTHERS, WERE SURPRISED AT PRIME MINISTER'S USE OF WORD "CONFIRMATION" IN DESCRIBING SUPREME COURT'S EXPECTED ACTION, AND OPINED THAT SUCH ATTITUDE, WITH EARLIER REMARKS OF GOP MINISTERS PIRZADA AND QAIYUM, AMOUNTED TO CONTEMPT OF COURT.

8. BHUTTO'S SURPRISING REVELATION TO PRESS THAT "CHANGES" COULD BE EXPECTED IN PUNJAB GOVERNMENT NEXT MONTH HAS SPURRED SPECULATION THAT KHAR IS DESTINED TO RESUME GOVERNORSHIP. OPINION REMAINS WIDELY DIVIDED OVER FUTURE OF CHIEF MINISTER RAMAY, GOVERNOR QURESHI AND OTHERS IN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT. FACT THAT BHUTTO DREW ASIDE SENIOR MINISTER ABDUL KHALIQ FOR TETE-A-TETE BEFORE TAKING OFF FOR LARKANA HAS SUGGESTED HE MIGHT BE CALLED ON TO SERVE AS WEAK CHIEF MINISTER UNDER KHAR AS STRONG GOVERNOR. DELAY IN ANNOUNCING THE "ROTATIONS AND REVOLUTIONS" IS ATTRIBUTED BY MOST OBSERVERS TO RECENT TENSIONS IN NWFP, BHUTTO'S CALL FOR KARTAL ON KASHMIR, STILL-EXPECTED VISIT SHAH OF IRAN AND OTHER DIGNITARIES FOR LAHORE PEOPLE'S FESTIVAL, AND ABSENCE IN NEPAL OF PRESIDENT CHAUDHRY. ANTI-KHAR POSTERS HAVE BEEN CREDITED TO LIBERAL WING OF PPP WHICH SEES RESURRECTION OF CONSERVATIVE AND ALLEGEDLY CORRUPT KHAR GROUP AS SERIOUS THREAT TO PPP PROGRAM. EVIDENTLY THE SUPPORTERS OF SOCIALISM, TYPIFIED BY RAMAY, ARE NOT PREPARED TO SURRENDER WITHOUT A FIGHT.
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